

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A camera control system for controlling a linked operation of a plurality of cameras via a network, said system comprising:

camera setting means for setting a plurality of cameras connected to the network as cameras to be linked with one another;

movement setting means for setting conditions and contents of a linked movement for each of the cameras set by said camera setting means;

camera-state-information acquisition means for acquiring information relating to at least one of panning, tilting and zooming states of the plurality of cameras set by said camera setting means;

starting means for starting, when a camera satisfying the conditions of the linked movement set by said movement setting means is present based on the state information acquired by said camera-state-information acquisition means, the contents of the linked movement corresponding to the conditions of the linked movement set by said movement setting means; and

output means for outputting a control command corresponding to the contents of the linked movement to at least one camera to be linked with the camera satisfying the

set conditions.

2. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said camera setting means comprises identifier storage means for storing an identifier for a camera assigned by an arbitrary client apparatus to perform a linked movement.

3. A system according to Claim 1, further comprising: operation-right request means for requesting, when a request for an operation right for a camera from an arbitrary client apparatus has been received, the operation right for the camera, and an operation right for at least one camera which performs a linked movement with the camera.

4. A system according to Claim 3, further comprising: information storage means for storing, when it has been impossible to acquire an operation right for any one of the cameras to be linked for which operation rights have been requested by said operation-right request means, information defining a control to be performed in such a case,

wherein said output means outputs a control command to a camera which performs a linked movement based on the information stored in said information storing means.

5. A system according to Claim 4, wherein the control

information to be performed stored in said information storage means is a control of forcedly acquiring an operation right for the camera which is already being used.

6. A system according to Claim 4, wherein the control information to be performed stored in said information storage means is a control of replacing the camera which is already being used with an alternative camera.

7. A system according to Claim 4, wherein the control information to be performed stored in said information storage means is a control of waiting for a predetermined time period until an operation right for the camera which is already being used is acquired.

8. A system according to Claim 4, wherein the control information to be performed stored in said information storage means comprises:

(a) a control of forcedly acquiring an operation right for the camera which is already being used;

(b) a control of replacing the camera which is already being used with an alternative camera; and

(c) a control of waiting for a predetermined time period until an operation right for the camera which is already being used is acquired.

9. A camera control method for controlling a linked operation of a plurality of cameras via a network, said method comprising:

a camera setting step of setting a plurality of cameras connected to the network as cameras to be linked with one another;

a movement setting step of setting conditions and contents of a linked movement for each of the cameras set in said camera setting step;

a camera-state-information acquiring step of acquiring information relating to at least one of panning, tilting and zooming states of the plurality of cameras set in said camera setting step;

a starting step of starting, when a camera satisfying the conditions of the linked movement set in said movement setting step is present based on the state information acquired in said camera-state-information acquiring step, the contents of the linked movement corresponding to the conditions of the linked movement set in said movement setting step; and

an output step of outputting a control command corresponding to the contents of the linked movement to at least one camera to be linked with the camera satisfying the set conditions.

10. A method according to Claim 9, wherein said camera setting step comprises an identifier storing step of storing an identifier for a camera assigned by an arbitrary client apparatus to perform a linked movement.

11. A method according to Claim 9, further comprising: an operation-right requesting step of requesting, when a request for an operation right for a camera from an arbitrary client apparatus has been received, the operation right for the camera, and an operation right for at least one camera which performs a linked movement with the camera.

12. A method according to Claim 11, further comprising: an information storing step of storing, when it has been impossible to acquire an operation right for any one of the cameras to be linked for which operation rights have been requested in said operation-right requesting step, information defining a control to be performed in such a case, wherein said output step outputs a control command to a camera which performs a linked movement based on the information stored in said information storing step.

13. A method according to Claim 12, wherein the control information to be performed stored in said information stor-

ing step is a control of forcedly acquiring an operation right for the camera which is already being used.

14. A method according to Claim 12, wherein the control information to be performed stored in said information storing step is a control of replacing the camera which is already being used with an alternative camera.

15. A method according to Claim 12, wherein the control information to be performed stored in said information storing step is an operation of waiting for a predetermined time period until an operation right for the camera which is already being used is acquired.

16. A method according to Claim 12, wherein the control information to be performed stored in said information storing step includes:

- (a) a control of forcedly acquiring an operation right for the camera which is already being used;
- (b) a control of replacing the camera which is already being used with an alternative camera; and
- (c) a control of waiting for a predetermined time period until an operation right for the camera which is already being used is acquired.

17. A storage medium storing an operation processing program for controlling a linked operation of a plurality of cameras via a network, said program comprising the processes of:

setting a plurality of cameras connected to the network as cameras to be linked with one another;

setting conditions and contents of a linked movement for each of the set cameras;

acquiring information relating to at least one of panning, tilting and zooming states of the plurality of set cameras, starting, when a camera satisfying the set conditions of the linked movement is present based on the acquired state information, the contents of the linked movement corresponding to the set conditions of the linked movement; and

outputting a control command corresponding to the contents of the linked operation to at least one camera to be linked with the camera satisfying the set conditions.